China-India Dispute

And Nehru's Historical Blunders

By: Muhammad Sagheer

Under British rule, **Tibet, Roof of the world**, was not a part of China and considered itself an independent state, but China did not recognize its independence. That is why the war between China and Tibet was going on. Since both the states were weaker than Britain at that time, British India did not face any particular threat from this border. The British government had trade relations with the Tibetan rulers. In addition, some of the rest houses and telegraph lines of British India were also in Tibet. So trade needs were being met. These things obviously got to India after the partition of 1947.

When China abolished Tibetan sovereignty and made it part of China in 1950, the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, unilaterally gave all these things, such as rest houses, to China in order to maintain good relationship. Nehru's action also makes it clear that India had no objection to China's accession to Tibet. This was **Nehru's historic diplomatic blunder** which allowed this accession to happen easily and not to persuade China in return. Nehru's move was probably due to the idea that by recognizing Tibet as part of China, China would recognize India's position on the disputed border of Ladakh. Now, for the first time in history, China has become a direct neighbor of India. Because the buffer zone, in the form of Tibet, was gone and it was not a small area. The whole border of India was with Tibet except Ladakh and still is. When Tibet became part of China, **Indian Chief of Army Staff recommended to Prime Minister Nehru that there was no longer a weak state like Tibet on this border but China which could invade India as well. So some defensive measures are necessary to secure the border, but Nehru did not take it seriously. He asked his general to focus on the**

disputed Kashmir border. This was Nehru's great mistake, the consequences of which India later suffered. India's Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Valla Bhai Patel also sensed a possible future threat from China. He wrote a letter to Nehru in November 1950 stating that India's border with China was not demarcated and that if Tibet also came under Chinese control, India's defense would be weakened and Chinese aggression could occur at any time. We must do something about it.

Nehru formed a committee on this which was named **Himmat Singh Ji Committee**. The committee had to suggest what to do about the NEFA area, which China claimed as southern Tibet and therefore Chinese territory. But after Patel's death in December 1950, no significant progress was made on the issue. In fact, Nehru did not see China as a threat. He believed that China and India would resolve issues through dialogue. But the real threat to India is from Pakistan so all their attention was on Pakistan. At that time, China was also embroiled in the Korean War, so China preferred a temporary silence on the border dispute. It was another historic mistake of the Indian Prime Minister after the Himmat Singh Ji Committee that China did not take matters seriously and continued to ignore the issue.

In 1954, Nehru visited China and signed an agreement with the Chinese government for a period of eight years. This is called **Panchsheel Agreement**. It emphasized mutual co-operation and good relations, and did not discuss the border dispute but left it to the future. Until then, India-China relations were very good and Hindu and Chinese used to chant slogans of brotherhood. Nehru's critics also object to this Agreement, arguing that **it gave China eight years to consolidate its control over Tibet and avert any threat from India. Moreover, China, then a poor country, had a long way to go to increase its military power.**

PANCHSHEEL PRINCIPLES
OF
MUTUAL CO-EXISTENCE DISCUSSED UPON HERE
1. MUTUAL RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S TERRITORIAL
INTEGRITY AND SOVEREIGNTY.
2. MUTUAL NON-INTERFERENCE IN EACH OTHER'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS.
3. EQUAL AND MUTUAL BENEFIT WORKING RELATIONSHIP
4. MUTUAL NON-AGGRESSION
5. PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE
APRIL 28 Th, 1954

Clashes between China and Tibet were still ongoing. Meanwhile, in 1959, the **Dalai Lama**, the spiritual leader of Tibet, escaped with many of his followers to India, where he was granted asylum. India's move was nothing short of open hostility to China and this was a clear violation of the Panchsheel Agreement. But India assured China that its territory would not be used for any evil in China or Tibet. **The Dalai Lama settled in India and established the Tibetan government in exile, which still exists today.** But this does not mean that India does not consider Tibet a part of China. India has repeatedly recognized Tibet as part of China. In 1959, on Rajiv Gandhi's visit in 1988 and on Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit in 2003. But perhaps India has sheltered the Dalai Lama to put pressure on China and to use this card in some future deals.

In 1960, Nehru and Chinese Prime Minister Zhou-en-Lai had correspondence and meetings on this border dispute. Zhou-en-Lai wanted the two countries to resolve this issue on the basis of on ground facts and give and take. He hinted that **India would withdraw from the Aksai Chin area on the Ladakh side and China would withdraw from NEFA, which is in southern Tibet**. But Nehru did not agree. This could be a great opportunity for better relations between India and China and for strengthening India's economy in the future. Nehru was adamant that the "McMahon Line was the regular border in the east and on the Ladakh side in the west. In 1842, the Maharaja of Kashmir had a border agreement with Tibet and China. Therefore, the entire area of Ladakh and Aksai Chin also belongs to India". On the contrary, China's position was that the "McMahon Line was settled with Tibet and China did not recognize Tibet as an independent state but considered itself a part of it". Regarding the western border, there were also three clear evidences against India›s claim to the northern and northeastern border of Ladakh in the state of Kashmir.

1. When the British annexed the state of Kashmir to India in 1846, they approached China several times to establish a border between the north and the east, but China did not agree. Now obviously if a border had been drawn in 1842 then why were the British contacting?

2. The History Division of the Indian Ministry of Defense was ordered in 1953 to draw a new map with a new demarcation of Ladakh unilaterally, without taking China and Pakistan into confidence. In 1954, Nehru enacted the new map and ordered the burning of the old ones. If Nehru thought that the border had been drawn in 1842, then what was the need to make a new map?

3. In the census of 1891 and 1901 of British India, the area of the state of Kashmir was recorded as 80,900 square miles. In the 1911 census, it was increased to 84,258 square miles. But in 1941 it was reduced to 82,258 square miles. Sardar Patel, India's first home minister, also repeated the area in a white paper shortly after independence. In the 1961 census, India increased this area to 86,024 square miles, which means India increased 3,766 square miles unilaterally. Whereas, no agreement was reached during this period and no territory was conquered by the Indian Army.

The **Aksai Chin** area in Ladakh is strategically important to China. Because in order to strengthen its control in Tibet, the road connecting Sung Qiang with western Tibet passes through here. That is why China never wants to let go of Aksai Chin. Access to Aksai Chin was easy from China and difficult from India because of the Karakoram Range in the middle. **Zhou-en-Lai was ready to declare the Karakoram Range as a border, but India did not want to give up Aksai Chin and wanted the whole area up to the King Ying mountain range**. Nehru's rejection of China's offer kept the issue going and added to the tension, which eventually escalated into a **War in October 1962**. India was defeated in NEFA on the eastern border and an entire South Brigade was captured by China. The brigadier himself was captured. India's performance in the Ladakh area on the western border has been relatively good.

In November 1962, China itself declared a unilateral ceasefire and abandoned almost the entire NEFA territory on the eastern border and the Chinese army retained its pre-war position. They went back and the whole region was returned to India. However, in the west, the territory conquered by China in Ladakh was not returned. It also included the 38,000-square-kilometer area of Aksai Chin. After the war, a temporary military line of 320 km came into existence in this area of Ladakh. Called the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**. They still claim the place in Ladakh where the Chinese army came in the 1962 war and it is considered as China's claim line. But obviously India does not accept it and still stands by its old claim line.

In 1963, Pakistan further strengthened its relations with China and exchanged some territories. **The territory of Shamshal and Khanjarab, which was claimed by China, given to Pakistan and Pakistan in return gave to China the area of Shakshlam Valley which was a part of Ladakh**. India objected this exchange but China responded that this agreement is interim and when the Kashmir issue between India and Pakistan is resolved, it will be re-negotiated with whichever party gets the territory.

Those few years, between China, India and Pakistan, have been very important and far reaching. Because **if Nehru had listened Zhou-en-Lai and exchanged land with him in East and West, the relations between Pakistan and China today could have been between India and China**. The result of this historic mistake of Nehru is before the world today. India's thousands of kilometers of border with China is not only insecure, but with an economic power like China, India's relations have been deteriorating for decades. As a result, India is insecure on both its borders, China in the north and Pakistan in the west, and therefore spends heavily on its defense.

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